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THE WASHINGTON POST
1 October 1980

Criticism on Billy Draws Response by White House

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The White House made public yesterday a document answering a series of questions on the Billy Carter affair posed by a special Senate subcommittee and defended President Carter's handling of the situation involving his brother's ties to Libya.

In a display of annoyance, White House officials said they made the document public because of the leak to the press Monday of a draft version of the subcommittee's final report on its investigation of Billy Carter.

The same document was provided to Senate investigators Monday and "we would expect that the final report will reflect the information" contained in it, the White House said.

There were no important revelations in the White House document, which contained responses to questions posed by the subcommittee last week.

The draft of the subcommittee report, which is to be made public later this week, said the investigation of Billy Carter's ties to Libya was conducted "honestly and conscientiously" by the Justice Department. But the same draft report said the president and some of his closest aides deserve to be publicly chastised for poor judgment in their handling of the matter.

Many of the questions posed by the subcommittee dealt with the president's precise state of knowledge of his brother's activities in connection with Libya and whether the president attempted to intervene in Billy Carter's relationship with the foreign government.

In response, the president, in the document released yesterday, reiterated his earlier statements on his knowledge of his brother's activities and defended his judgments in dealing with the affair. For example:

• The president said he was not informed in advance of a second trip to Libya in 1979 by his brother.

• The president did not discuss with his advisers the advisability of making a private or public statement on Billy Carter's second trip to Libya. "The president considered Billy Carter's trips to Libya to be strictly private visits involving no governmental function or purpose," according to the document. Moreover, after publicly disassociating himself from some of his brother's remarks in connection with the Libyan ventures, the president "did not feel that any further announcement by him or private statement to the government of Libya was called for," the document said.

• The president did not discuss with his brother Billy Carter's effort to win an increase in Libya's oil allotment for an American oil company. Billy Carter had already been advised against the venture by White House national security affairs adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and "the president believed a further call from him was likely to be counterproductive," the document said.

The president also was quoted in the document as defending the decision of intelligence agency officials not to inform him of reports in April 1980 that Libya was about to make a payment to his brother. Intelligence officials are in the best position to judge how such information should be used, and in this case did the correct thing by turning it over to the Justice Department for its investigation of Billy Carter, according to the document.